(a) whether it is a fact that State Governments are not granting mining lease and prospecting licences and number of applications are pending for approval;

(b) if so, the number of applications pending till date with different States;

(c) the number of applications cleared and permission granted during last two years; and

(d) the steps taken by the Union Government to speed up process for disposing applications by State Governments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) to (d) under Section 10(3) of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 reconnaissance Permits, Prospecting Licences and Mining leases are granted by the State Government concerned. Proposals for prior approval of the Central Government for grant of mineral concessions for minerals specified under the First Schedule to the aforesaid Act originate from the respective State Governments and are processed and disposed of by the Central Government as per provisions of law. Since the grant of Mining leases and prospecting Licences is under the domain of the State Governments, therefore, the information regarding details of applications pending, cleared and permission granted by the State Governments is not centrally maintained. The existing scheme of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 and rules made thereunder provide early disposal of mineral concession applications by the State Governments in the interest of mineral development.

However, from time to time the Central Government has been sensitising the State Governments for early disposal of mineral concessions. The necessity for such early disposal of mineral concessions have been discussed and recommended by the Mineral Advisory Council in its meeting held on 30.8.2000, the Conference of State Ministers of Mining and Geology held on 14.7.2001 and in the Tripartite meeting of the Central Government, State Governments and Investors held on 12.11.2001.

Setting up of Defence Procurement Board in Ministry of Defence

1678. PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Procurement Board has been set up in Defence Ministry of arrange procurement for all the three Services;

(b) if so, the names of members of the Board; and

(c) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Based on the recommendations made by the Group of Ministers on reforming the National Security System, the Government has set up a Defence Procurement Board, headed by the Defence Secretary for procurement of weapons, equipment and weapon systems for the Services. Other members of the Defence Procurement Board are Secretary, Defence Production and Supplies, Secretary, Defence Research and Development, Secretary, Defence (Finance), Chief of Integrated Defence Staff of Chairman, COSC (CISC), Vice Chief of Army Staff, Vice Chief of Air Staff, Vice Chief of Naval Staff and Special Secretary (Acquisition). Financial Adviser (Acquisition) is the Member Secretary of the Defence Procurement Board. All activities related to Acquisition on the capital account in the Department of Defence have been entrusted to the Defence Procurement Board.

Forming the Andaman and Nicobar Command

1679. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to form the Andaman and Nicobar Command;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) by when it would come into existence?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE(SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Government have issued orders on 1.10.2001 for setting up of Andman and Nicobar unified Command by placing all force components of the three Services and Cost Guard located in Andaman and Nicobar Islands under the operational command of C-in-C, Andaman and Nicobar Command. The Command has become operational on 8.10.2001.

Defence deals which can be investigated for corruption

†1680. SHRI BALKAVI BAIRAGI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have identified defence deals wherein investigation can be done under the suspicion of corruption;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.